

Don't Take Anyone's Word For It

ANONYMOUS

The regiment was getting two units ready to deploy for a battle group exercise, and we had two aircraft in phase D inspections. With most of our units deployed, we had only a small number of people left around, so everyone—including the quality assurance representative—was doing maintenance and inspections.

I'm a power plant QAR in a UH-60 unit. Being a QAR had been a real learning experience for me, but I was starting to feel confident in my ability to do the job.

While I was helping break down a spindle assembly, I was asked to inspect the greasing of a disconnect coupling. I walked over to the other aircraft in phase D and watched mechanics grease the disconnect coupling and torque the mount bolts for the aft end of the No. 5 driveshaft.

The phase card says to fold the tail and then to inspect and grease the disconnect input and output jaws. The sergeant working the task cards said he would do it when he had enough people to fold the pylon. I told him I would sign off the cards after he inspected and greased the jaws. I then went back to help break down the spindles on another aircraft.

Later that day, the noncommissioned officer in charge and phase coordinator asked me to sign off the cards for any work I witnessed for their aircraft. I pulled out the phase cards for the disconnect coupling and read through them to make sure I hadn't missed anything. When I came across the inspection and greasing of the disconnect jaws, I remembered I hadn't been able to witness that because the tail pylon was spread.

I asked the sergeant, "Was this part of the card completed?" The answer I got was, "Yes, but we've already spread the tail again." I looked at him, paused for a minute, said "Okay" and signed off the cards. The NCOIC and the phase coordinator said nothing.

Two days later, the aircraft flew a functional check flight and logged 10.1 hours over five days. After four daily turnaround inspections, we discovered during a 30-hour inspection that the disconnect jaws hadn't been greased.

I was the main person at fault because I didn't inspect what I'd signed for. My shortcut could have cost people their lives or caused extensive damage to the aircraft. Still, it cost the unit a lot of man hours and parts to replace the couplings that had been damaged from operating without grease.

Shortcuts and high-tempo schedules can lead to disaster. I relearned some basics, not the least of which was supervise all required maintenance. Verify each step and scrutinize the pubs and maintenance requirement cards that pertain to each procedure. As a QAR, you're there to make sure everything is done correctly the first time. Don't take anyone's word for it.

-- Editors note: The author's name was withheld by request. If you would like to publish a story anonymously in Knowledge, please contact the editor by email at knowledge@crc.army.mil.